

Child Support – Glossary of Terms

ABSENT PARENT (AP): See Non-custodial parent. Absent Parent or AP is another name for non-custodial parent.

ALLEGED FATHER: A man whose legal relationship to a child has not yet been legally established.

ARREARAGE: The total unpaid child support obligation owed by a parent who is obligated by an administrative or district court to pay support.

CHILD SUPPORT GUIDELINES: A standard method for setting child support obligations based on the income of the parent(s) and other factors as determined by State law.

SHOW CAUSE CONTEMPT: A district court proceeding to enforce the court's orders. A contempt action may be filed, for example, if a parent has willfully failed to pay child support. If found guilty, the court can impose a fine or incarceration or both. The court must set a purge fee if incarceration is imposed.

CUSTODIAL PARENT: Within the child support program the parent or custodial person who has legal or physical custody of a child and the right to receive child support on behalf of the child.

DEFAULT: Failure of a person, usually the defendant to file an answer, response, or appeal in a civil case within a certain number of days after having been served with a summons and petition.

DEFAULT JUDGMENT: Decision made by the court when the defendant fails to respond. Normally, the party asking for relief from the court will be granted everything requested in the petition or motion when the other party is in default.

DEFENDANT: The party in a court action who is being sued.

FRAUD: False statements including statements made to state officials with the intent of wrongfully receiving public assistance. Within the child support program, fraud most commonly refers to the custodian receiving child support payments and not reporting them while receiving WFFA.

IMMEDIATE INCOME WITHHOLDING: A way to collect support through mandatory payroll deduction. Income withholding can be ordered at the time a support order is established or enforced. An income withholding does not necessarily mean that the employee is behind in his/her support payments.

LIEN: A cause filed in court to attach a portion or all of an obligor's real or personal property. Generally, liens are placed on property owned by a judgment debtor or through workers' compensation court against any settlements that might be reached

LOCATE: Process of obtaining a verified address or employer for a non-custodial parent in order to begin child support establishment or enforcement.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT (NCP): Any individual who is absent from the home and is legally responsible for providing financial support for one or more children. The non-custodial parent is also referred to as the absent parent, obligor, or responsible parent.

OBLIGATION: Amount of money to be paid as support by the responsible parent according to law.

PATERNITY: Fatherhood; male parentage.

PATERNITY ORDER: An order entered in an action brought to establish the paternity of a child born out of wedlock.

PETITION: A written request that is filed in district court to initiate a legal action.

PURGE FEE: The purge fee is what a person must pay or do to get out or stay out of jail. The purge fee is set when the person is found guilty of contempt of court.

SUBPOENA: A process commanding a witness to appear in district court, give testimony and bring specific documents, if requested.

SUMMONS: A legal notice to a person of a suit pending in court which requires an answer or appearance.

SUPPORT ORDER: A legal document that establishes a child support obligation by a court order.

Child Support Related Links

- [State of North Carolina Child Support Enforcement Office](#)
- [Federal Child Support Agency](#)

For more information, contact:

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